United Nations

Press Release

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WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Government of Iraq informs United Nations of its decision to return Kuwaiti property seized after its occupation of Kuwait on 2 August.

- International Committee of the Red Cross transports 294 Iraqi prisoners of war to Baghdad from Saudi Arabia.

- Austria and Spain announce contributions to United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees.

- International Labour Organisation experts conclude that international pressure is still needed to break apartheid.

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The Government of Iraq has informed the United Nations that it has decided to return Kuwaiti property which it seized after its occupation of Kuwait on 2 August.

In a letter to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council, Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz said Iraq was prepared to hand over Kuwaiti gold and paper currency, museum objects and civilian aircraft as soon as possible. He also asked to be informed about the procedures for carrying out the handover.

The Iraqi decision comes in response to the latest of the Council's resolutions which demanded that Iraq accept all previous 12 resolutions on the Iraq-Kuwait situation, including an immediate return of all Kuwaiti property it had seized.

In another communication to the United Nations, the Government of Israel has called on United Nations Member States to draw the "inevitable conclusions" on what it called "the true character of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)", which it said was revealed during the Gulf crisis. In a letter to the Secretary-General on 1 March, made available today, the Permanent Representative of Israel, Yoram Aridor, said PLO officials had repeatedly backed Iraq's aggression in the Gulf crisis.

(more)

For information media—not an official record

In a letter to the Secretary-General yesterday, the Acting Chairman of the Committee on Palestinian Rights, Ricardo Alarcon de Quesada of Cuba, expressed the Committee's condemnation of what he called "the continuous mass detention of Palestinian civilians, including minors". He said Amnesty International had reported that some 14,000 Palestinians had been held in detention without charge or trial since December 1987. Such detention, he said, was a "collective punishment" by the Israeli authorities against the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory and was in violation of the 1947 Geneva Convention.

He said the Committee appealed to the Secretary-General to take immediately all necessary action to free the detainees, and to ensure the safety and protection of Palestinians in the occupied territory, including Jerusalem.

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The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) announced today that it had transported 294 Iraqi prisoners of war on two ICRC aircraft to Baghdad from Saudi Arabia.

The ICRC said it had inspected all prisoners in accordance with the provisions of the Third Geneva Convention, before sending them to Iraq.

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Austria has contributed $1 million to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) earmarked for Palestine refugee schoolchildren who have enrolled in Agency schools in Jordan due to the Gulf crisis. The contribution is to help cover the costs faced by UNRWA in accommodating an extra 2,500 Palestine refugee children who arrived in Jordan from the Gulf between August and December 1990.

Spain has announced a contribution to UNRWA of about $207,000 for the Agency's project to build a 200-bed general hospital in Israeli-occupied Gaza. The Agency has announced that it needs contributions to cover the $35 million required to build and equip a hospital in Gaza, and run it for the first three years.

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The South African economy has been seriously affected by international financial sanctions aimed at the suppression of apartheid, according to a study by a team of independent experts appointed by the International Labour Organisation (ILO). The team also concluded that sanctions had not been universal and further pressure was needed.

The report said sanctions by the world community had led to a heavy outflow of foreign capital, a significant contraction of new inflows of investment capital and a nationwide economic malaise aggravated by the mounting burden of foreign debts.

(more)

Between 1985 and the end of June 1989, the total outflow of capital from South Africa amounted to about $40 billion, the report stated. Nevertheless, experts noted, the sanctions had not been water-tight. Some international banks and even Governments continued to extend financial support to the Government through such measures as rescheduling of foreign debts and extension of trade credits.

The independent experts called for the maintenance of financial sanctions as a tool of applying pressure on the Government to end the system of apartheid.

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